

To: Board of Education
From: Jan Wright and Kris Monn
Date: February 23, 2010
Subject: Fee-Based Extended Day Kindergarten

Policy Reference: 6:90 Kindergarten

Agenda Item: Fee-Based Extended Day Kindergarten

Item Type: **Consent** Action Information Discussion

Recommendation: I recommend the Board approve the \$250 per month fee for extended day kindergarten.

Background Information:

In January of 2007, the Kindergarten Committee completed an extensive program evaluation of the kindergarten program. Through that evaluation, we analyzed data to determine the effectiveness of our full-day, half-day, and WHEEL (We Help Enrich Early Literacy) programs. WHEEL is our accelerated reading program for students at-risk for adequate reading achievement. Two very important conclusions were drawn from this study:

1. The additional time to process learning provided by the full day kindergarten program does provide some benefits to students over the half day sessions. Full day students achieve at slightly higher rates in reading. When entering first grade, they appear to more easily adjust to the physical demands of attending school all day and are more prepared for the concepts taught in the specials classes. However, these benefits are short-lived with teachers reporting that by the second semester of first grade, no differences are apparent. Additionally, by second grade there are no differences in reading or math achievement between full and half day students.

2. The foundation provided by the WHEEL program does appear to provide long-term benefits to students. By the end of kindergarten, the reading achievement gap between WHEEL and non-WHEEL students is closed considerably. Furthermore, the vast majority of WHEEL students meet state standards in reading in third and fourth grade. (p.44, *Kindergarten Program Evaluation*, January 2007)

Even though the report found no long-term benefits to full-day kindergarten, this program is highly valued by the parents in our community. Since our funding status has changed with the state, there has been a debate over the funding of this program.

Providing a fee-based extended day program is one solution. Parents would be charged \$250 per month to extend their child's half-day kindergarten program to a full day. The curriculum and instruction of this program would be similar to the program we currently provide in full-day kindergarten. This fee was calculated by the Business Office by using the actual personnel costs of staffing the extended day kindergarten, adding unanticipated expenses, and dividing the total by the number of expected seats available.

One concern that has been raised in our planning process is equity. We propose waiving the fee for the following students:

- Those who are eligible for special education and their individualized educational plan requires a full day of services
- Those who are eligible for free or reduced lunch
- Those who are eligible for fee waivers
- Those who are assessed as at-risk of academic failure

We currently have a process in place to determine eligibility for special education, free lunch, reduced lunch, and fee waivers. We also have a process of determining our students at-risk of academic failure in reading. This process, which occurs at the beginning of the school year, is used to provide services to our students in our WHEEL program. We would move the screening of students to May and use a broader approach to the definition of at-risk. This may include students with social, emotional, or any academic concern. This early screening would allow parents to be notified by June 1 if their child is eligible for the fee to be waived.

We would require parents to request the extended day kindergarten by March 19. This would allow us to determine the number of full-day and half-day staff needed. If more than 45 parents request full day at any one school, a lottery would take place. Those who did not "win" the lottery would be allowed to open enroll their child for one year at one of our elementary schools that had an opening. However, parents would need to provide transportation to that school. We will need to

determine the minimum enrollment in full-day sections so that we do not create a situation where we need to expand our half-day staff.

We believe that this approach will allow us to provide a service to parents and save the jobs of teachers.